

CALIFORNIA STUDENT AID COMMISSION

Office of the Executive Director

December 14, 2005



Ms. Amy Cameron
California Department of Education
Executive Office
1430 N Street,
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Cameron:

On behalf of the California Student Aid Commission, (Commission), I am writing to summarize the Commission's action at its December 13, 2005 meeting related to the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) as its implementation relates to the Commission's Cal Grant programs. Please be assured that the Commission understands the need for the State to utilize the CAHSEE test to ensure that graduating high school seniors are indeed prepared for life beyond high school. We would like to continue to work with you to address issues of mutual concern.

In order to further the Commission's mission to *"Make education beyond high school financially accessible to all Californians"* the Commissioners approved the following motion:

It is the position of the California Student Aid Commission that the issues involving the California High School Exit Exam be resolved consistently with the goal of ensuring access to higher education for all California students. To that end, the Commission recommends that the Legislature, the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the California Department of Education, the Secretary for Education, the State Board of Education, and others with responsibility for the issues involving the California High School Exit Exam resolve those issues in a way that will enable a student who completes the high school course work required for graduation and passes a federal ability-to-benefit test to be eligible to be considered for a Cal Grant Entitlement award.

The Commission is acutely aware of the necessity in this State to ensure that high school graduates receive the education they deserve and need to succeed, not only in their pursuit of a higher education, but in life. By taking this action, the Commission does not wish to lessen the impact of the CAHSEE in measuring the effectiveness of and improving K-12 education. However, a number of students that will have proven financial need and will meet the established merit components of the Cal Grant Entitlement programs will be denied a Cal Grant award and potentially access to a higher education if they are unable to pass a portion of the CAHSEE. Please note that the program, since 2000, has required Cal Grant A students to achieve at least a 3.0 Grade Point Average (GPA) and Cal Grant B students (among California's most needy students) to achieve at least a 2.0 GPA.

The Commission is committed to taking a deliberate, thoughtful approach that is designed to strengthen, rather than weaken, the Commission's ability to deliver the financial aid that students with financial need desperately need to achieve their dreams of graduating from a California college, university, or career technical program.

I hope this letter helps to clarify the action the Commission has taken related to the California High School Exit Exam. If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact me at (916) 526-8271.

Sincerely,



Diana Fuentes-Michel
Executive Director

cc: Members of the California Student Aid Commission
Jason Murphy, Office of Senator Jack Scott
Mary Gill, Assembly Higher Education Committee
Bruce Hamlett, Assembly Higher Education Committee
Amy Supinger, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Anne McKinney, Office of the Secretary for Education
Robyn Boyer, Office of the Governor
Jennifer Kuhn, Legislative Analyst's Office
Cheryl Black, Senate Republican Fiscal Committee
Amy Ruschow, Assembly Republican Fiscal Committee